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New York

President:	Mr. Wang Guangya	(China)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Antonio
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	France	Mr. de La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

Security Council mission

Progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52)

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04-24136 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Burundi, Egypt, Ireland, Japan, Rwanda and the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2004/52, which contains the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Kalomoh: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting and for allowing me to introduce the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52), which is before members. The report summarizes advances attained in addressing the recommendations made on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on Burundi and on preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes region.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as Council members are aware, the transitional Government was established in June 2003, at about the same time as the Council mission was visiting the region. The transitional Government's comprehensive programme of work for the transitional period was approved by the new Parliament in December, and the implementation of that work programme is well under way.

Progress has also been made in normalizing relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours, but much needs to be done in that area, with the support of the international community. The pace of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation of Rwandese, Ugandan and Burundian armed elements has accelerated beyond even our own expectations. The International Committee in Support of the Transition has been meeting in Kinshasa on a regular basis, under the chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Committee has been instrumental in resolving several deadlocks that had arisen between and among the parties.

With regard to the situation in the Ituri district, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) assumed responsibility from the Interim Emergency Multinational Force on 1 September 2003, following the adoption by the Council of resolution 1493 (2003). In Bunia, MONUC has been enforcing a weapons-free policy, and the first phase of the Mission's military expansion outside Bunia is now under way. It should be recalled that MONUC's military deployments in Ituri are intended to stabilize the region to enable the Ituri Interim Administration to begin functioning and to facilitate its integration into the national transitional process.

Concerning support for the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a Consultative Group meeting of the country's development partners was held on 17 and 18 December 2003 in Paris. At that meeting, donor countries and organizations pledged more than $3.9 billion in assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period 2004-2006.

I now turn to the situation in Burundi. As described in the report before the Council, significant progress has been achieved towards implementation of the recommendations of the Council mission. The deployment of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was completed in October 2003, and the Mission has been carrying out outstanding work. However, in spite of the vital support and financial contributions provided by a number of donors, AMIB continues to face serious financial and logistical difficulties. United Nations agencies in Bujumbura, with political guidance from the United Nations Office in Burundi, are assisting AMIB within their respective mandates. In the area of donor assistance for economic recovery, at a forum of the development partners of Burundi held in Brussels in mid-January this year donors pledged a total of $1 billion to support Burundi's socio-economic recovery in the period 2004-2006.

The prospects for peace in Burundi improved considerably with the conclusion of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement between the transitional Government and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie — Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) of Pierre Nkurunziza and the subsequent integration of FDD representatives into the transitional institutions. The implementation of the agreement has so far proceeded well.

As Council members may be aware, since the publication of the report, President Ndayizeye of Burundi and a high-level Forces nationales de libération (FNL) (Rwasa) delegation met, for the first time, in the Netherlands from 18 to 21 January 2004, thus providing further grounds for optimism. The Secretary-General urged the parties to pursue these discussions with a view to having the FNL join the peace process as soon as possible, thus paving the way for the establishment of a full-fledged peacekeeping operation in Burundi.

As noted elsewhere in the report, the challenges that lie ahead in Burundi are enormous, as the transitional period is expected to end in November 2004. I take this opportunity to inform the Council that the United Nations multidisciplinary reconnaissance mission is set to arrive in Bujumbura today to examine the situation on the ground and assess how the transitional Government can best be supported in order to ensure the successful conclusion of the peace process — bearing in mind that this process will end with the elections in November 2004.

As noted in the report, advances achieved in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi over the past six months have created a new momentum in favour of convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region. In this connection, since the launching of the conference's preparatory process in June 2003, a number of important steps have been taken with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and donor countries.

The core countries' National Coordinators have so far held three meetings to discuss the objectives, themes and structure of the conference. As a result, the outline of the conference has started to take shape. Another important development was the setting up of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region, which will be an important partner throughout the preparatory process and the actual holding of the conference.

Under a revised timetable approved by the National Coordinators of the core countries last month, the conference's first summit is scheduled for November 2004, in the United Republic of Tanzania. However, as noted in the progress report, the increased level of activities in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region requires additional staff resources for that Office. The preparatory process risks being delayed, or even seriously affected, by any lack of necessary budgetary provisions for staff and other resources for the Office of the Special Representative.

As described fully in the Secretary-General's progress report and reflected in my remarks today, substantial progress has been made in the peace processes in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the Security Council mission to the region last June. However, much remains to be done to consolidate these historic advances and to build sustainable peace in the region as a whole. The international community's commitment to continue supporting peace efforts in the subregion is therefore as critical as ever.

The reports we have received from the region indicate that the parties greatly appreciate the visit of the Security Council mission to the region, as it provided an added impetus encouraging the parties to fulfil their commitments to the peace process in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The parties, as well as countries visited by the mission such as South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, welcomed the mission as an encouragement to the parties and Governments in the countries involved to continue to support the peace process in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Kalomoh for his statement.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in accordance with the understanding reached among Council members and in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when addressing the Council.

Mr. de La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kalomoh for his briefing and the Secretary-General for his report. In a short while Ireland will be making a statement on behalf of the member States of the European Union, and we completely support that statement.

The Security Council mission to Central Africa and the Great Lakes region last June, which I had the honour of leading, was in the region at a decisive time for the two peace processes. I think it can be said that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as in Burundi, in the space of eight months considerable work has been accomplished. I will refer to both situations, starting with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the time of our visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the problems in that country were particularly grave. The transition agreement was threatening to unravel, the eastern part of the country was once again the scene of violence and armed offensives, and peace was at risk. Thanks to the efforts of all, major progress was accomplished. The transitional Government of national unity was established on 30 June 2003, in accordance with the solemn commitment undertaken by President Kabila before members of the Security Council. The question of high military command was resolved and the relations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Uganda and Rwanda considerably improved. That was a point to which members of the Council had given particular attention. Thanks to Operation Artemis and to the strengthening of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), hostilities have, to a great extent, come to an end in the east.

Nonetheless, insecurity does remain. Last week a Kenyan MONUC observer was murdered in Ituri in the exercise of his duties. I wish to reiterate France's condolences to his family, to his loved ones and to the Kenyan Government. Everything must be done so that the perpetrators of this crime do not go unpunished. MONUC, which now has a robust mandate, must make the militias understand that such actions will no longer be tolerated. Furthermore, in this context it is essential to strengthen the monitoring of the arms embargo. An end must be put to the trafficking thanks to which armed groups keep the region in a state of instability.

However, this tragic event must not obscure the results that have been obtained in recent months in disarmament and in the repatriation of foreign combatants. True, much of the road still remains ahead of us. We must succeed in particular in the reintegration of Congolese combatants, who in some cases will rejoin civilian life, and in other cases, the new armed forces and the police. In that regard, I pay tribute to Belgium, which for several weeks now has been conducting in Kisangani the training of the first integrated brigade of the new Congolese army.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is entering a new and delicate period. The war is officially over, but a great deal remains to be done to complete national reconciliation. Elections must be held in June 2005 as scheduled. It is at times such as these that we must be careful that our attention does not wane. The Congolese must continue their efforts, and the international community must help them and support the efforts of Mr. Swing, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who was with the Council last week. We greatly appreciate his efforts, and his briefing and the action he is taking.

The Council mission returned from Burundi with high hopes. It seemed to us that all the parties to the transition were filled with a sincere desire for peace,

reconciliation and reform. Despite the hardships that hit the country hard during the summer, that desire prevailed in the end. The agreement that the international community urged was concluded with Mr. Nkurunziza's Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, which has now taken its place in the transitional authorities. For their part, the Forces nationales de libération of Mr. Rwasa have begun to evince a constructive attitude, and initial discussions took place last month in the Netherlands. Of course, that progress remains to be solidified, but it is encouraging. To facilitate those talks, we are counting very much on the efforts of the States of the facilitation and regional peace initiative and, in particular, on the involvement of South Africa.

We pay tribute to the remarkable mobilization that Africa has demonstrated. The African Union decided to deploy to Burundi its first peacekeeping mission. That operation, which has support from the European Union, will be crucial to consolidating the ceasefire. In due course, we will have to study the conditions under which a United Nations operation could carry on from it.

I wish to refer briefly to the question of the international conference. The crises in Central Africa and in the Great Lakes region cannot be understood in isolation. Borders have they stopped neither armed rebel movements nor military interventions by States. Nor have they stopped trafficking weapons or in natural resources. We know that an effective and lasting solution to the problem must be regional in scope. That is also the objective of the international conference now being prepared. As we have already said, to be successful, this conference must be open to the participation of all neighbours of the Congo and Burundi, without exception. It must thus include, we believe, Angola, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. It must also focus on the fundamental issues of security and regional economic cooperation. It is essential that the first summit produce concrete results in the fields of peace, security and good-neighbourliness; those results will consolidate the peace and reconciliation processes.

I believe that the Council mission to Central Africa, whose results we are assessing today, was useful in a number of ways. It helped Council members in their work by giving them concrete knowledge of the processes under way. It encouraged the Council's unity and strengthened the Council's message to the parties. Mr. Kalomoh has told us that the mission was warmly welcomed in the region. I believe it has also helped the Council more effectively to support the work of the Secretary-General and his special representatives. I pay tribute to them and to all United Nations personnel who, with them, are working for peace in the region.

Mr. Antonio (Angola) (*spoke in French*): We too thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting on Central Africa. We also thank Mr. Kalomoh for the briefing he has just given the Council. We believe that this meeting is being held at a crucial time and that we should seize the opportunity offered by the hope for peace in Central Africa.

This meeting is being held not long after we had the privilege of hearing Mr. Swing brief the Council on the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The peace process in that country has now gained speed: the efforts of the international community and the political will now being demonstrated by the transitional Government of national unity are cause for hope.

Nevertheless, with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as was stated by the representative of France, there are still some grey areas that are cause for concern. I refer to areas in the east of the country, where there is still instability, violence, human rights violations and violations of the rights of women in particular. I think many of us have seen reports in the press about the situation of women in the eastern part of the country. We think that this very important, even crucial question requires our further attention.

As the representative of France stated, we need to see how to stop this violence, which could jeopardize a process that is moving in a positive direction. The representative of France mentioned the murder of a Kenyan observer. We think all these elements require us to formulate a strategy with respect to the armed groups in the east of the country. Perhaps the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) should focus on this, as was done in Ituri and, in West Africa, in Côte d'Ivoire. There, a strategy had to be designed for a given area in order to provide the proper response to a specific situation.

The arms embargo is another aspect deserving the Council's attention. We know that weapons are not free; they are bought with the very resources of the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those two aspects are closely linked and deserve the Council's attention.

When the Council adopted resolution 1522 (2004), it stated that reform of the security and defence sectors was crucial to the process. We welcome that fact that some countries are already extending assistance. We also welcome the efforts of MONUC. We think that this question as well is decisive for the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to Burundi, we all recall the appeal made in the Council Chamber by Deputy President Zuma of South Africa. We recall that he specifically requested the deployment of a United Nations force to Burundi. We think that such a proposal is of interest at a time when we are overseeing this risk-filled transitional period. Such support is crucial.

We welcome the fact that the Council mission visited Burundi, and hope that it will now make recommendations that can respond to all the questions we are now asking with respect to the deployment of a United Nations force. But at the same time, we need to remember that the African Union force has confronted enormous problems — without the support of the international community. The difficulties encountered by the force could have a negative impact on the process itself.

As is always the case with regard to situations of conflict, the return of peace to Burundi has given rise to new economic and social problems. We again call upon the international community to ensure that the appeal that has been launched is properly supported and that resources are provided to the Government of Burundi. We must also encourage a positive attitude on the part of the Bretton Woods institutions and the non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies which are currently involved in seeking solutions in Burundi.

With regard to coordination within the United Nations, we believe that the question of Burundi still merits attention and that cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council could make a difference there. Such was the case in Guinea-Bissau, and we believe that we could take advantage of the efforts of the Economic and Social Council, which has set up an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi, chaired by the representative of South Africa. We believe that that is an important instrument. It, too, carried out a mission to the region and made some important recommendations. Instruments such as the Advisory Group and the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa could prove useful in this situation.

Members may recall that when it analysed the interim report of the multidisciplinary assessment mission to Central Africa headed by Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh (S/2003/1077), the Council concluded that a regional approach was important with regard to Central Africa. Thus, our ongoing discussions about West Africa are of importance as we consider the question of Central Africa. It is a region where the majority of countries are in a post-conflict situation — or have experienced conflict fairly recently — and thus need an appropriate approach to be taken. That said, however, our discussions, and the recommendations of the Security Council mission, should not be isolated from the recommendations made by the multidisciplinary mission headed by Mr. Kalomoh.

Furthermore, regional efforts are under way with regard to integration and the quest for political solutions. The eleventh summit meeting of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was held last month in Brazzaville. That summit was seen as a turning point for the revival of ECCAS. We believe that the summit took some important steps, including the establishment of a free trade zone. It also decided to establish a regional brigade to tackle threats to peace. The implementation of that decision will be carried out by Angola, Gabon, the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe. We believe that those initiatives need our support.

We also welcome the preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes region. As is well known, Zambia has been admitted as the seventh core country and Angola, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo have been admitted as co-opted countries, while Egypt has been admitted as an observer country. We continue to hope that the neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi will play an active role with regard to the conference.

At this stage, we believe that, in the light of the conclusions that have been arrived at through the regional approach and given the link between development and the quest for peace, United Nations

attention to the question of Central Africa is of great importance. During the public debate that was held on the interim report of the multidisciplinary mission to Central Africa (see S/PV.4871), the representative of ECCAS welcomed the proposal to appoint a special representative for the region and expressed the hope that discussions would continue, that the time would come when the United Nations presence would be strengthened in the region — for all the reasons we have outlined, taking advantage of the window of opportunity — and that such discussions would lead to the establishment of a United Nations office there.

Those are some of the points that we wanted to share with the Council at this stage. We have spoken at some length, but we have been speaking from our heart as well as from our head. We share in the problems of the region — we are a member of the Economic Community of Central African States — so our statement today has been somewhat longer than those of other speakers.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Africa is on the Security Council agenda for the fourth time in February — the fourth time in less than three weeks. That frequency — testimony to the importance that the Council attaches to African issues — is to the credit of the Council, and, in particular, to the credit of China, your fine country, Sir, which is known to be a good friend of Africa.

We would like to thank Mr. Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his outstanding briefing, as well as the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report that he has submitted to us (S/2004/52). That timely report paints a realistic picture of the situation in Central Africa and of the relevant actions undertaken to implement the recommendations of the Security Council mission.

Since the return of the mission, we have observed significant progress in the transition process both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, as well as tangible signs of peace and reconciliation that show the political will of the two Governments and of others involved in the peace process to break the cycle of missed opportunities and make a real commitment to peace.

We welcome the peaceful changeover that took place in Bujumbura, which made it possible to begin, without incident, the second part of the transition period, as provided for in the Arusha Peace Agreement, as well as the inauguration in Kinshasa of a Government of national reconciliation in accordance with the comprehensive and inclusive agreement. Those major events were a decisive turning point in the peace process in those two countries. The obstacles that remain to be overcome are considerable. They require that all the parties redouble their efforts to meet the timetables established, in order to put a definitive end to the conflict.

At this current crucial stage, those two countries deserve to be encouraged and supported in their efforts to build a lasting peace for the well-being of their respective populations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, referendums under conditions of transparency and credibility are the cornerstone of the peace process and require that the agreed measures be implemented quickly, in particular the establishment in both countries of national armies under unified command, and improvement of the security situation, which is necessary in order to organize the elections.

We welcome the commitment undertaken by the transitional Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make considerable progress, before the first anniversary of its establishment, in the establishment and functioning of the various elements of the security forces, including the police, the close protection corps and the army. If respected, that commitment should provide even more encouraging results with regard to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in the country, the progress of which is not meeting our expectations.

We encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to define clear priorities, in spite of the many measures it must undertake in order to make more visible the country's progress towards holding the scheduled elections. We are also pleased to see the renewed commitment of donors to continue their support for the transition process, through various programmes in identified sectors, in agreement with the transitional Government.

In that regard we welcome the very efficient role of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and in particular its redeployment in eastern Congo to improve the security situation there. We are gratified by the constant improvement in relations between the Congo and its neighbouring countries, and in particular

by the creation of bilateral structures of cross-border cooperation to resolve shared security problems.

Concerning Burundi, while there are grounds for hope in the recent peaceful transition and the admission into the Government in December 2003, of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), the situation, in our view, remains of great concern due to continued fighting around rural Bujumbura and in the north-western part of the country, in spite of the decision taken in early January 2004 by officials of the Palipehutu-FNL (Rwasa) to enter into direct talks with the transitional Government. Today we urgently appeal to the rebel forces to lay down their arms and to join the peace process taking place in Burundi so that it can succeed according to the established timetable.

We urge the international community, which has shown remarkable generosity in its solidarity with Burundi within the partners development forum which took place in Brussels in early January 2004, to use all of its influence to attain a comprehensive ceasefire in Burundi as soon as possible.

In that regard, it is important that the help promised to Burundi be promptly mobilized in order to support the peace process as a whole, and that such help, above all, contribute to financing the implementation of DDR programmes that are now under way in liaison with the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB). We welcome the constructive role played by AMIB, which has concretely proven the determination of the African Union to work resolutely to solve the conflicts that are afflicting the continent. With regard to the deadlines and the need to speed up the peace process, it is urgent that the Security Council consider the request of the Government of Burundi and of the facilitation and regional initiative for Burundi to transform AMIB into a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

All the efforts to stabilize the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi cannot assure a sustainable peace in those countries unless they are accompanied by a comprehensive improvement in the situation among the countries of the Great Lakes region. We therefore welcome the considerable progress already made in the framework of preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes region, and in particular the establishment of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendations on strengthening the resources available to the Office of his Special Representative for the Great Lakes region to allow him to complete preparations for the conference as soon as possible. It is important today to take the opportunity of the progress already made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi and the hopes for national reconciliation that it raises to expedite the holding of this long-awaited international conference on the Great Lakes region. We are of the view that the conference will help to capitalize on the current dynamic of peace to achieve the stabilization of the whole subregion in order to promote integrated regional development through the rational use of its resources to bring well-being and prosperity to its peoples.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative in convening this meeting. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Tuliameni Kalomoh for introducing the progress report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/52).

The situation in Central Africa has been one of the main concerns of the Security Council over the years. More recently, there have been several positive developments in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the transitional Government has been working steadily for more than seven months, the transitional Assembly is now operational and the International Committee in Support of the Transition is meeting regularly. The Security Council authorized a strengthened presence and mandate for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which has been supporting the rule of law, police reform and the organization of elections. The Council has also authorized the transitional Government to deploy its armed forces to Kisangani, which is a further step towards extending national authority over the territory, and has agreed to impose an arms embargo in the Kivu and Ituri regions. We certainly welcome those developments.

Last week, we had the opportunity to listen to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, on the latest events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result,

we were better able to assess recent achievements and to weigh the series of measures still required for stabilization.

In that connection, my delegation is deeply saddened by the tragic death of a Kenyan MONUC military observer in an ambush in Ituri. We urge the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to strive to bring to justice all those responsible for that criminal act.

In Burundi we were pleased to note that the delegation of Palipehutu-FNL (Rwasa) and President Ndayizeye met in the Netherlands last month. Though not conclusive, that initiative clearly confirms that dialogue is the only way to solve differences in the country. It sets the path for Agathon Rwasa's movement to join the "camp of peace", as stated in paragraph 62 of the Secretary-General's report.

My delegation must nevertheless express serious concern over the human rights situation in Burundi. Too many violations continue to be reported, and the Security Council has not been sufficiently responsive. It has been well over a year since the Council was requested by the Burundian President to consider establishing an international commission of judicial inquiry, and it was only in January that the terms of reference of the assessment mission were agreed upon by the Council.

Despite difficulties on the ground, the mission deployed by the African Union in Burundi is working very effectively with the Government institutions and United Nations agencies. We commend its work and call upon the international community to provide further technical and financial support to the mission. This need will be made even clearer when we receive in the near future the report of the multidisciplinary United Nations mission that is expected to arrive today in Burundi to assess the needs of the country in all fields.

Since the Council has been considering the individual situation of each country in Central Africa, I wish to concentrate the last part of my remarks today on two points: development and regional dialogue.

We consider that initiatives to create a healthy economic environment are central if a peace-building process is to be sustainable in the long run. We cannot commit massive international efforts to the quest for peace only to see them crumble for lack of enough attention to economic stability and sustained development. In this connection, the rule of law in the exploitation of natural resources and the improvement of trade opportunities in the region cannot be overlooked.

As regards the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we concur with assessments made by the Panel of Experts that the time has come for institutional reforms to be undertaken in the area of regulation and control of natural resources now that the country is unified. "Illegal exploitation", as stated in the Secretary-General's report,

> "remains one of the main sources of funding for groups involved in perpetuating the conflict". (*S/2004/52, para. 19*)

In Burundi, the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group was impressed by the initiatives of the Burundian Government on sustainable development. My delegation is, however, disappointed that only 10 per cent of pledges made in 2000 and 2001 by the donor community have been disbursed to the country so far, as is mentioned in the report before us today. At this juncture, the Security Council should reinforce the Secretary-General's appeal for donor countries to accelerate disbursement.

The United Nations has an important role to play in conducting long-term initiatives on the road towards stabilization and development. That includes the Security Council, as well as its coordinated efforts with the Economic and Social Council. The cases of Guinea-Bissau and Burundi are good precedents that should be further developed. Moreover, the common efforts of countries of the region towards improving trade are a major step and we welcome initiatives that are being taken bilaterally by Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's transitional Government.

That brings my delegation to the second point — regional dialogue. The Secretary-General has pointed out that prospects for convening the conference of the Great Lakes have significantly improved. Indeed, the organizational meeting held last month in Addis Ababa resulted in the decision to hold the first summit at the level of head of State in Tanzania in November this year and a second one in mid-2005. We commend the Special Representative of Secretary-General, Ibrahima Fall, and all the seven core countries for this important

development. We are confident that this dialogue will develop into a pact around the four main thematic areas targeted by the conference: peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, and humanitarian and social issues.

We are also pleased by the interest shown by other countries in the initiative. Angola, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic are now working together with the core countries in the preparatory process for the convening of the international conference. The participation of neighbouring countries can only add to the success of the event. In addition, we welcome the comments made by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that any other country outside the region that has shown interest in the process can be present as an observer — as Egypt is doing — so long as the core countries agree to the request made by the country concerned. Broadening participation beyond the subregional framework, without affecting the decision body, will certainly enhance the impact of the conference worldwide.

As we have seen when discussing the individual peace processes in Central Africa, the challenges ahead are enormous, but major accomplishments should not be discounted. To pave the way for sustainable peace in the region, we must pay due attention to its development component and give due support to African ownership and regional dialogue in post-conflict stabilization. This is where our cooperative action is most needed.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh for his introduction to the Secretary-General's report on the Security Council mission to Central Africa.

My delegation considers this exercise to be timely and necessary because the Council's missions have become a fundamental instrument in its decision-making process and a clear demonstration of our interest in the processes under way in the countries we visit. In the case of Central Africa, the mission that was headed by Ambassador de La Sablière in June 2003 was the fourth since the Security Council resumed in 1999 its practice of sending missions to the field.

As some of the preceding speakers have already indicated, since the dispatch of the mission to Central Africa there have been encouraging signs of progress in the region. We welcome the progress made in the process of establishing the transitional Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Striking advances have also been made in the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement process for the armed Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian elements in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In spite of the progress made at the national level, as we know, the situation in the Ituri district and in the Kivus has been characterized by instability and by ongoing grave abuses of human rights committed by various rebel movements. As has been noted here, the recent murder in Ituri of a Kenyan staff member of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reminds us that instability and violence still prevail in the north-eastern part of the country. My country vigorously condemns acts of violence, murder and other such crimes perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular against the civilian population. Such acts must not go unpunished and the perpetrators must sooner or later answer for them. This is a challenge to the entire international community, but more fundamentally to the Congolese themselves and especially to the transitional Government.

We support the report's conclusions regarding the need for the transitional Government to establish clear priorities in order to ensure the political transition. In this context, the reform of the security sector, the consolidation of the rule of law, respect for human rights and the preparation for future general elections are priority objectives.

The situation in Burundi, for its part, has also seen important progress and the prospects for lasting peace have improved. Since the Council mission's visit to Bujumbura, we have witnessed the incorporation of the rebel movements Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie, headed by Pierre Nkurunziza, into the institutions of the provisional Government. It is our hope that the statement recently made by Agathon Rwasa, the leader of the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération movement, that he would enter into negotiations with the Government of President Ndayizeye will lead to the prompt incorporation of that movement into the Arusha peace process.

The challenges of Burundi's transition process continue to require the full attention and support of the Security Council and the rest of the international community. In that connection, the recommendations made by the mission remain fully valid — particularly the appeal to donor countries to honour the pledges made at the Paris and Geneva conferences. That is all the more necessary since there is a serious risk that the signs of peace that we are seeing on the horizon could recede if they are not accompanied by an improvement in the living conditions of Burundi's population.

The significant progress of the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi provides an important impetus for the idea of holding an international conference on the Great Lakes region. We note with satisfaction the progress made over the past six months in designing and elaborating a process to promote substantive dialogue among the countries central to such a conference, the United Nations, the African Union and the donor community. The commencement of the preparatory process for a conference has led to an increase in the activities of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region — an office that unfortunately has neither the staff nor the budget necessary to meet the tasks that lie ahead. That requires that the Council analyse in detail the mandates of the various offices and missions in Central Africa in the light of the new scenario before us and that it determine whether adjustments are needed to improve their efficiency.

A firm and lasting peace in the region is today an inescapable imperative. An African continent that has economic stability and that invests in the development of its people would be a major contribution by the United Nations system. In the context of the United Nations, Chile has always supported solutions and initiatives aimed at promoting the interests of the African continent, first by promoting the decolonization process, later through the bodies created in the United Nations towards that end and, more recently, by providing troops from our country's armed forces for peace efforts in the region.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the need to take the integrated approach with respect to Africa promoted by the Secretary-General. In that context, my country believes that the Security Council should consider in the coming months the possibility of organizing another mission to the Central African region. The objective of such a mission would be to assess on the ground the most urgent needs of the provisional Governments of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with respect to security sector reform, the establishment of the rule of law and the preparations for general elections at the end of 2004, at the beginning of 2005 and in June 2005.

Finally, we trust that the progress we have seen will be consolidated and improved upon with the full cooperation of the Organization.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): My delegation joins other delegations in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this public meeting to pursue continuity and follow-up with regard to the work of the Security Council in Central Africa. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his introduction of the Secretary-General's progress report (S/2004/52).

The Central African subregion is the heart of the continent, and its peace and stability have considerable impact on the entire region. The report of the Secretary-General is fittingly titled, since there has been significant progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the mission in the past seven months. The international community should capitalize on that positive momentum and should continue to build upon the achievements to date.

My delegation wishes to preface its statement by concurring with the view expressed by the multidisciplinary assessment mission that visited the Central African region from 8 to 22 June 2003 and concluded that

> "the prospects for positive change remain high, especially if the international community maintains and intensifies its partnership with subregional organizations, Governments and civil society groups to address the problems confronting Central Africa." (*S/2003/1077, p. 3*)

The Security Council mission led by France set out the direction and provided the impetus for progress in Central Africa. Despite the present challenges, the Council and the international community must sustain their efforts in the subregion. It is in that light that my delegation wishes to highlight the following.

Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we wish to commend the Congolese, the United

Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the African Union, particularly the Troika — Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia — for the establishment of the transitional Government last June and for the subsequent actions undertaken to build the foundations for security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, notably the establishment of integrated army and police forces, as well as the formation of the National DDR Commission. Efforts to consolidate the authority of the transitional Government in the entire country, particularly in the eastern part, need to be accelerated. My delegation also hopes that efforts to halt the proliferation of arms and the illegal exploitation of natural resources will be intensified, given that those activities account for the continuation of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, my delegation is confident that the Council will be able to adopt a resolution addressing those concerns.

My delegation agrees with the assessment made last week by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, William Lacy Swing, that the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo set for 2005 can be carried out if the international community provides its robust support, particularly to the United Nations, which would be organizing its largest elections ever. Those historic elections would also be an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a positive political environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in which the electorate would be able to make educated choices.

Concerning Burundi, my delegation is pleased to note that the prospects for peace in that country have improved. In that regard, we urge the transitional Government, the Burundians and the United Nations Office in Burundi to persevere in their efforts to further the peace process. The general insecurity and human rights abuses need to be addressed. Continued signs of peace are necessary to encourage the international community to accelerate the disbursement of pledges made at the Paris and Geneva conferences. As it is, we welcome the European Commission's announcement of the approval of $19 million in humanitarian aid for Burundi. We hope that that will encourage other donor countries to fulfil their pledges.

Application of the regional approach has never been more relevant than it is in the Great Lakes region. For years, the idea of an international conference on the Great Lakes region has been put forth, with no action being taken until now. It is thus gratifying to note from the Secretary-General's report that developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi have created new momentum in favour of such a conference, which could be held at the ministerial level by October of this year and at the summit level the following month. We hope that the change in the schedule for the conference, which was tentatively planned for June will provide enough time for the participating countries to consider the substance of the conference and to come up with concrete proposals to address the interlocking tragedies in Central Africa.

We commend the Group of Friends, co-chaired by Canada and the Netherlands, for its important role in providing political, diplomatic, technical and financial assistance in support of the preparatory process for a conference. We hope that all those efforts will lead to a security pact that will in turn lead to lasting and durable peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

We must not forget that more than 3 million people have already died as a result of the conflict in Central Africa and that the complexity of the situation has hampered its effective resolution for far too long. In that regard, my delegation would support the additional allocation of resources to the Office of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region to ensure that it can effectively carry out its mandate and the regional tasks entrusted to it.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the Philippines is the only speaker so far today who made his statement in less than five minutes.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): First of all, Mr. President, we would like to commend your initiative in convening this meeting. We would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2004/52).

Since the Security Council mission visited Central Africa, a number of positive developments have taken place. These include an improvement of the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, in Burundi, progress in the implementation of the Arusha Agreement, with the participation of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie — Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) in the transitional Government. There has also been an improvement in

the relations of the countries in the region, with the explicit desire of many of their leaders to move towards peace and reconciliation.

While we welcome these positive developments, we must also be aware that much more needs to be done to consolidate peace in the region. In this context, we condemn the brutal killing of a Kenyan military observer last week, and it is our hope that the perpetrators of this crime will be brought to justice.

It is obvious that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo progress is still required in the areas of security sector reform and the rule of law, as well as in the functioning of interim administrations, particularly in Ituri. While we welcome the holding of elections in May 2005, this must not be seen as an end in itself, but a means to an end.

Similarly, in Burundi, the peace process will not be complete without the inclusion in that process of all the factions, in particular the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) (Rwasa) faction. There is also a need to support the efforts of the African Union in Burundi, address the issues of transitional justice, which are a part of the Arusha Agreement, and help the badly battered Burundian economy stand on its feet.

The international community's goal in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo must remain the consolidation of peace and stability. One way to achieve this is by assisting both countries in the following areas: first, in extending their State authority; secondly, in carrying out meaningful security sector reform through the creation of a truly general national army and police; thirdly, in facilitating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, both local and foreign; fourthly, in strengthening the rule of law and putting an end to impunity; fifthly, in addressing humanitarian issues; and sixthly, in promoting national economic reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The recent tragic history of the region has clearly demonstrated how easy it is for instability and conflict in one country to spill over into another. Borders are porous and do not make countries immune from the free flow of arms and fighters and worsening humanitarian situations. Such issues cannot be handled by any one country alone. A regional approach is, therefore, indispensable. However, such an approach must aim at improving the political relations between States and at helping them jointly resolve the challenges they face.

As part of this regional approach, Pakistan supports the convening of the international conference on the Great Lakes region proposed for later this year. The conference, however, must yield tangible results. This can only be accomplished if the countries of the region and their partners outside the region can work together a priori to identify realistic objectives, themes and structures. At the very least, this conference must yield agreement on confidence-building measures to help consolidate regional peace and stability.

At the same time, there are underlying issues of a cross-cutting nature that will have to be addressed, and not only within national or regional frameworks. Those issues are the following.

First, one of the root causes of instability in the region is poverty. There cannot be any peace without poverty alleviation. The humanitarian situation, the success of DDR and the consolidation of peace are not possible without sufficient generation of sustainable economic activity. The international community must continue to assist not only the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, but also other countries in the region, to promote long-term socio-economic development.

Secondly, while greed may not have been the cause of conflict, it has been responsible for perpetuating it. There is an obvious and well-established link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the fuelling of conflicts in the subregion. The Secretary-General's report clearly states that "Illegal exploitation remains one of the main sources of funding for groups involved in perpetuating the conflict" (*S/2004/52, paragraph 19*). We must find those who finance these wars by buying, trading and engaging in the production and illegal exploitation of the region's natural resources. The extension of State authority and institutional reforms are imperative, as is the need for full disclosure of revenues earned from natural resources. We need a national, regional and global approach to address those issues.

Thirdly, the success of the peace process thus far has largely hinged on successful peacekeeping efforts — in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and in Burundi by the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB).

Both missions these need to be supported and, if necessary, augmented by the United Nations. Pakistan, as a major United Nations troop-contributor, will continue to support such activities in the region.

Finally, on a policy level, the United Nations itself needs to act coherently in Central Africa in addressing the diverse requirements for consolidating peace and stability in the region. It is imperative to achieve greater coordination and synergy between the endeavours of the three principal organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — in addressing the complex issues confronting the region. At the same time, the active engagement of non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies and, in particular, the international financial institutions is needed to bolster the whole effort. The idea suggested by Pakistan of ad hoc composite committees could be one means of building a comprehensive and coherent approach by the United Nations and the international community to complex crises.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to Mr. Kalomoh for having introduced this very interesting report from the Secretary-General (S/2004/52), on which I would like to make a few brief comments.

Regarding the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the progress made in the peace process since the Security Council mission is encouraging. Nonetheless, it is essential that the transitional authorities make progress without delay in key areas such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. They must also restructure the armed forces and undertake judiciary reform in order to put an end to impunity. All of this, of course, is with a view to holding free and democratic elections in June of next year.

With regard to Burundi, we welcome the progress made in recent months. We believe that the time has come to apply, without delay, the process of demobilization and disarmament and to tackle the restructuring of the armed forces. It is equally important that the necessary measures be taken for the establishment of the truth and reconciliation commission.

In connection with the future international conference on the Great Lakes region, we are pleased to note that during the meeting held in Addis Ababa, decisions were taken on participation in that conference and that progress is being made in clarifying its objectives, desired results and timetable. We thus encourage the participants in that process to continue their work, including the establishment of national preparatory committees by all participating States and the convening, as soon as possible, of an initial regional meeting of these committees, which will make it possible to further the preparations for the conference. Convening that conference and improving bilateral relations between countries of the region are positive initiatives that promote confidence-building measures and cooperation and strengthen the dynamic of peace being consolidated in the region.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kalomoh for his excellent introduction of the progress report of the Secretary-General on Central Africa (S/2004/52). When we considered the report of the Secretary-General on West Africa (see S/PV.4899), I could not help drawing a parallel with Central Africa and noting the striking similarities between those two parts of the African continent. At that time, I stressed the importance of a regional approach, which we feel is the only one that can encourage the emergence of a climate of lasting peace and stability able to lift the countries of the region from the crises that undermine them and whose transborder ramifications are obvious.

I do not need to dwell on the considerable progress made in restoring peace and security in the countries of Central Africa, in particular in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Last week, we had an opportunity to assess the progress made towards national reunification and the establishment of the authority of national Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to note the encouraging signs of the normalization of that country's relations with its immediate neighbours.

In that regard, my delegation welcomes the efforts made to help the transitional authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to speed up the establishment of an integrated and unified national army and to establish a national police force. But at the same time, we voice our concern at the absence of clarity and progress in creating a national plan defining the modalities for achieving this twofold objective, which is closely linked to the fate of the process of demobilizing and reintegrating Congolese combatants.

My delegation also expresses its concern at the delay in completing the work on the legislation that is essential for the future of the peace process and the transitional institutions, in particular with regard to the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, the drawing up of electoral districts — which is of prime importance for the elections scheduled for June 2005 — media laws, the fight against corruption, human rights and combating impunity.

With respect to the situation in Ituri and the Kivus, which continues to poison relations between the various protagonists in the peace process in the country, my delegation welcomes the redeployment of the forces of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to that triangle where Congolese and foreign combatants are concentrated. We are encouraged by the results achieved in a relatively short span of time, in particular with respect to the return of foreign combatants to their countries of origin. We believe that strengthening the arms embargo will greatly contribute to efforts to pacify that part of the country. We take note of the links among arms trafficking, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of the conflict and support the three-tier mechanism now before the Council for monitoring the embargo against arms flowing to that part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Burundi, after the signing and gradual implementation of the ceasefire agreement, new prospects for the return of peace and security have emerged. The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) has, in particularly difficult circumstances, helped greatly to stabilize the situation in the country. Important progress has been made, but numerous challenges remain before the holding of elections scheduled for next November at the latest.

It is high time the United Nations took on a role in Burundi. We believe that this should take the form of a peacekeeping mission to replace AMIB and support the peace process in the country until it is completed.

The example of MONUC's outstanding contribution to peace-building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mission's assistance in the process of preparing for elections and establishing rule-of-law institutions encourages us to advocate a greater international presence in Burundi, where the progress made in restoring peace remains very fragile because of the precarious economic and social situation, which is exacerbated by the flow of refugees and displaced persons and by the repatriation of combatants.

My delegation therefore welcomes the holding of the forum of the development partners of Burundi, held in Brussels on 13 and 14 January 2004. We hope that donors will speed up the release of pledged funds so that the transitional authorities can undertake reforms for restoring and strengthening peace in Burundi.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General which on 25 September 2003 brought together heads of State and senior representatives of countries of the region, and we welcome the adoption by the participants in that meeting of a declaration on the principles of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. That initiative strengthens our conviction that efforts should be made in the framework of a regional action strategy, something which has not so far been adequately explored by the international community.

From that perspective, my delegation considers the planned international conference on the Great Lakes region to be an irreplaceable framework for seeking solutions to the conflicts and the instability of the countries of Central Africa and for consolidating the peace process under way in the region.

My delegation expresses its satisfaction at the progress made towards holding this important event in November 2004 in Tanzania, and it encourages the countries of the region to continue their efforts to create the best conditions for success, including by initiating a substantive debate enabling the conference to achieve the desired results. My delegation welcomes the progress made at the meetings of the country coordinators for the countries concerned, in particular the progress made at the 19 December 2003 Nairobi meeting, which established the conference's structure, composition, objectives and topics. My delegation shares the opinion that the four themes of the conference are interdependent and of equal importance, and that they deserve to receive equal, priority treatment in the preparatory process.

Finally, I welcome the establishment on 4 December 2003, under the chairmanship of Canada and the Netherlands, of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region and express my support for the Secretary-General's recommendation to provide additional

resources for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his presentation. I associate myself with the remarks to be made later by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union and, especially, express the condolences of the British Government to the Government of Kenya, to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and especially to the family of the Kenyan military observer killed in Ituri on 12 February.

Last year's Great Lakes mission was a valuable initiative at a critical moment: critical for the peace process in Burundi and especially for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for the future of the region. It is right that we should put the situation in a regional context. The efforts of the transitional national Government and the Governments of Rwanda and Uganda to improve relations are indeed very welcome.

Turning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I congratulate MONUC on its work. It is striking that the attack last week took place during a MONUC mission to stop harassment of the civilian population. All the parties in Ituri must put an immediate end to such violence. I rally readily to the argument put forward by Ambassador de La Sablière that there is a strong case for MONUC to take a more robust posture with the militia in Ituri. The failure to do that at the beginning of conflict always pays us badly at the end.

The transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — in particular, election preparations, security sector reform and the political and economic reunification of the country — poses huge challenges. For that, we need a transitional national Government-owned strategy and a real national Government — one which then coordinates fully with the donors. The United Kingdom will continue to step up its engagement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo as long as the transition remains on track.

The Security Council can support the process by keeping the situation under regular review and commenting, including publicly, as necessary. The International Committee in Support of the Transition is an important tool on the ground to help identify concerns and urge solutions.

We also need to continue to tackle the violence in the east. The arms embargo imposed by resolution 1493 (2003) cannot put a perfect seal on the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. How could it, given the length of the border? But it can have a real deterrent effect and make clear that we are serious. We hope, therefore, that we can reach early agreement on an arms monitoring mechanism.

Turning to Burundi, the African Mission is doing a very good job under difficult conditions and serious financial constraints. The African Union, South Africa, Mozambique and Ethiopia are to be congratulated on their significant contribution to supporting the peace process in Burundi. The United Kingdom has made, is making and will continue to make substantial sums available, especially to the African Mission in Burundi. We are also open to the idea that this force might in due course be replaced by a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Burundi.

We look forward to the report of the Secretariat mission that is due to travel to the region this week — one of the three United Nations missions currently, or soon to be, in the country.

Lastly, turning to impunity, we remain concerned about the continuing and recent human rights abuses in Burundi. In this context, we welcome and strongly support the projects developed by the Burundi Field Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Progress towards establishing a truth and reconciliation commission has been too slow. We hope that the disagreement between political groups, which so far has held up parliamentary adoption of the law on truth and reconciliation, will soon be overcome, and the law adopted.

In our view, it is important that the question of impunity and post-conflict justice be addressed at an early stage. That is necessary if there is to be lasting peace in Burundi based on democratic principles fostering truth and reconciliation and, at the same time, achieving justice.

I have a lot more to say, but as others have made similar points and as you, Mr. President, have imposed a five-minute time limit, I will willingly stop.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Central Africa remains one of the crisis-

ridden subregions of the African continent and requires the ongoing attention of the Security Council. We have studied in detail the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52), and on the whole we agree with the assessments and conclusions it contains.

With regard to specific situations in the subregion, we would like to highlight a number of issues. The overall situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains generally stable. The process of resolving the crisis in that country is gaining ground. Some positive trends are emerging in the areas of achieving national reconciliation, extending State authority to the entire territory of the country and preparing for the general elections to be held in 2005 — although all of these processes are encountering significant difficulties. Steps to create the first integrated army brigade in Kisangani effectively marked the beginning of the formation of a unified armed force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thanks to active international intervention, there has been an obvious improvement in the security situation in the eastern part of the country. Steps are being taken to end impunity for war crimes, although much remains to be done. It is important that all parties participating in the peace process remain fully committed to their obligations and that the forces that are resisting the peace process be prevented from continuing their activities. Additional efforts are required to disarm and repatriate foreign combatants.

Some progress has been made in the resolution of the situation in Burundi. State structures for the transitional period are functioning and contacts are continuing with the forces that have not yet laid down their weapons. An end to violence must be achieved in the provinces. The progress achieved in the repatriation of Burundi combatants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be further developed. The African Mission in Burundi deserves our appreciation. We hope that the transitional period will end, on time, with the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections.

The situation in Central Africa has been positively influenced by the overall improvement in the regional situation. We take note of the trend towards normalization in relations among Kinshasa, Kigali, Kampala and Bujumbura, which signed, in September 2003, a declaration of principles on good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. All of these developments encourage the creation of a context that is more conducive to efforts by the interested parties to prepare the way for an international conference on peace, security, confidence-building measures and economic development in the Great Lakes region.

Given the effective role played by United Nations structures in establishing good-neighbourly relations and settling crises in Central African countries, we express support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Swing, his Representative for Burundi, Mr. Dinka, and his Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Fall.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): We, too, welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/52) and its introduction by Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh.

We appreciate the particular insights offered by participants in Security Council missions. We believe that these missions provide an opportunity to learn the situation on the ground and that they are an invaluable means of informing Council deliberations. It has been almost nine months since the Council mission under discussion took place. Much of what has transpired — thanks to the efforts of the United Nations and the peoples and Governments of the region — has been positive. Nonetheless, the peoples of Central Africa continue to endure significant suffering.

In general, my delegation endorses the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report. We would wish to highlight certain points. With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my delegation was deeply saddened by the death last week of a Kenyan member of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). He lost his life in a violent attack, while carrying out his duties on behalf of peace and justice, in Ituri. His family and his country have our condolences.

Despite continued insecurity in parts of the Central African region, there is cause for hope. Since the mission travelled to the Congo, a transitional Government and its administrative arrangements have been established. The Security Council adopted resolution 1493 (2003), which gave MONUC a more robust mandate and authorized the expanded force level required to carry it out.

The Council remains united in its determination to stop the flow of illicit arms into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Member States should be reminded of their obligation under resolution 1493 (2003) to halt the supply of arms to factions in the Congo from their territories or by their nationals. The adoption of resolution 1493 (2003) also allows the United Nations to build on the impressive work carried out by the French-led European Union intervention. Operation Artemis successfully addressed the serious violence then occurring in Bunia.

Last week, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, focused our attention on the many tasks that remain to be completed by the 2005 election date set by the Congolese themselves as the end of the transition. These tasks include a commitment to continued improvement in the relations between Governments of the region.

We thank the Secretary-General and his Representative for their efforts to create better relations among Central African nations, and in that connection we look to the Great Lakes conference now scheduled for November 2004 as a forum to solidify and endorse improvements in regional relations. We would ask fellow Member States not to wait for the conference to establish stronger ties with their neighbours, but to arrive at the conference with those stronger ties already cemented as an achievement. The Secretary-General's report refers to increased resource requirements related to the preparations for the Great Lakes conference. We hope that the friends of the conference will direct sufficient resources to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Fall, to prepare for, and carry out, that important meeting.

Recent months have seen a trend in Burundi towards greater peace and stability. Burundi's people have experienced violence and insecurity for too long. The success of the peace process is critical to pave the way for a normal democratic process and much-needed economic development. We welcome the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) joining the ceasefire and the Government and urging the remaining rebel group, the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) also to join the ceasefire.

We agree with the Secretary-General's report that the African Mission in Burundi has been doing outstanding work in Burundi, despite the serious challenges it faces. The work of the African Mission in Burundi is indispensable to the success of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and to the overall peace process. We applaud the efforts of the troop-contributing countries — Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa — and we would highlight in particular the invaluable role of South Africa in furthering Burundi's peace process and its leadership during the November summit of the Great Lakes Regional Initiative on Burundi.

We would also recognize the contributions made to the African Mission in Burundi on a bilateral basis by the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, in addition to that of my own country, as well as the more recent generous European Union contribution. However, the African Mission in Burundi continues to face a funding shortfall. We are looking for additional funds to support that Mission, and we urge others to provide financial support as soon as they can. Burundi has been an excellent example of an African solution to an African problem and of the African Union's contribution to peace and stability on the continent. The international community should therefore do everything possible to support the Mission's efforts.

My delegation looks forward to continued engagement by the Council on the problems of Central Africa, and to cooperation between the Council and States of the region.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) *(spoke in French)*: I too would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report (S/2004/52). My thanks go also to the Council presidency for having convened this meeting to discuss the Security Council mission to Central Africa, which is an excellent opportunity to assess the implementation of its recommendations. Mr. Kalomoh, as usual, gave us an outstanding introduction to the report. I would like to pay special tribute to the enlightened leadership of Ambassador de La Sablière as head of mission.

Romania associates itself fully with the statement to be made by the Irish presidency of the European Union. I take this opportunity to say that we very much

appreciate the efforts made by the European Union for the stabilization and development of Central Africa.

We take note of the overall progress in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which could signal a new favourable context for peace and stability throughout the region. In our view, the top priority for the success of the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to strengthen the capacity of the transitional Government of national unity and the extension of its authority throughout the territory, beginning with its capacity to control all of its borders. Furthermore, the Government must speed up the formulation and adoption of legislation essential for the electoral process, and must implement the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Congolese combatants.

We echo the appeal made in the report of the Secretary-General for the Council to continue to support the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular concerning the elimination of arms trafficking, a condition which is essential for the stability and development of the country.

When we look at the report, we must note that it does not consider in detail the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That aspect should be addressed in greater detail in future reports.

Turning to the situation in Burundi, Romania, like other Council members, welcomes the considerably improved prospects for peace in that country. Here, we welcome the discussions that took place recently in the Netherlands between the President of Burundi and a delegation of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL). We very much encourage the parties to continue their discussions in order to achieve concrete results and to consolidate the peace process.

Without doubt, there is now a real chance for a return to normalcy in that country. But the Burundians themselves, as well as the international community, need to take advantage of the favourable context. Much remains to be done, since the peace process will soon enter the crucial phase of elections. The parties must make sure that the ceasefire is fully implemented. We also hope that political progress will lead to improved living conditions for the people and an improvement in the humanitarian situation. Urgent and substantial support by the international community will be essential to ensure that peace in Burundi is irreversible. From that standpoint, the work done by the United Nations Office in Burundi as well as the important role played by the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) are commendable.

It would be logical to mention, at this point, the timeliness of an international conference on the Great Lakes region, given the progress made in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi. Romania unreservedly supports the organization of such a conference. We are encouraged by steps recently taken, both nationally in the countries concerned and regionally, to prepare for the conference. In this context, we welcome the convening of a preparatory meeting in Addis Ababa on 14 January, with the participation of the representatives of the subregional organizations of the Great Lakes region.

I take this opportunity to stress the need for regional coordination, which would make it possible to implement political and economic confidence-building measures that are vital to the development of the entire Great Lakes region. The strengthening of a climate of trust and the capacities of the countries of the region to develop regional cooperation projects is an important condition for guaranteeing concrete results and the success of the international conference on the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I would like to join other delegations in thanking Mr. Kalomoh for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General. We would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting, because we welcome this opportunity for an in-depth discussion of the situation in the Central African subregion. The current political climate in Central Africa offers the region the historic opportunity to claim at last its rightful place as a major economic and political force on that continent.

In addition to the statement that Ambassador Ryan of Ireland will shortly deliver on behalf of the European Union presidency, which we fully endorse, allow me to highlight four short points that we believe to be of major importance in this context.

First, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is making great strides towards political stability. During President Kabila's visit to Berlin on 6 February, the German Government acknowledged the efforts of the transitional national Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and underlined its willingness to continue to support the peace process there

bilaterally as well as within the frameworks of the European Union, the United Nations and the international financial institutions.

Still, there are many obstacles that must be overcome before sustainable peace is achieved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Security in the eastern Congo has improved following the success of Operation Artemis and the subsequent increase of the strength and capabilities of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Let me say that we are deeply saddened by the death of a Kenyan military observer in Ituri. We express our condolences to the Kenyan Government and we hope that those responsible for the crime will be brought to justice swiftly.

One decisive element of peacekeeping in eastern Congo is the weapons embargo for North and South Kivu and Ituri, set forth in Security Council resolution 1493 (2003). The arms embargo must be strengthened in order for it to have a deterrent effect. We hope that the Security Council will soon be in a position to reach a decision on this matter.

With regard to the security sector throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the high-level meeting in New York a week ago developed a common understanding on the way forward and identified the most urgent tasks for the transitional national Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the international donor community to ensure that the transition stays on track and that elections can be held on schedule.

Secondly, the peace process in Burundi seems to be on the right course with the opening of a dialogue between the Burundian Government and the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération. The Security Council has welcomed this development and is looking forward to its next stage. In due course, the Council will have to decide on the question of an enlarged United Nations role in the Burundian peace process.

The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) has contributed tremendously to the stabilization of that country. Germany has supported AMIB bilaterally, in addition to its share of the European Union's €25 million for the Mission. We commend the role AMIB has played in stabilizing the country. South African Vice-President Zuma reminded the Council, at the open meeting in December, that one of the objectives of the African Mission in Burundi was to help create conditions that are favourable for the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. My Government believes that the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Burundi must now be given serious consideration.

Thirdly, from a regional perspective, efforts to normalize relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring States are being stepped up with the declaration of principles of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation of September 2003, subsequent high-level visits between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and agreements on the reopening of embassies. Such confidence-building measures are indispensable building blocks for the Great Lakes region conference.

This brings me to my fourth point. The initiative for a Great Lakes region conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union is finally taking shape. In this context, let me say that we are not at all discouraged by the recent adjustment to the conference's timetable. On the contrary, we are pleased with the decision to shift the first summit to a date that allows for careful and thorough preparation of the substance, format and structure of that important process.

Despite these encouraging developments, the process of the political and economic stabilization of the Central African subregion remains vulnerable and is not yet irreversible. Many of the problems afflicting the region can be dealt with effectively only at the regional level. The disarmament, demobilization and successful reintegration of former combatants into regular armies or civilian life is a cross-cutting issue, as are the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illegal flow of arms to belligerents.

All of these challenges can be met only through joint efforts by the countries in the region and the international community as a whole. Strong regional involvement will remain a decisive factor. That means strengthening existing subregional mechanisms, supporting promising developments within the African Union, and further coordination between mechanisms as well as cooperation with the United Nations, the international financial institutions and other stakeholders.

Cooperation among mechanisms and organizations also requires the identification of

respective strengths and areas of responsibility. Further cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, in particular, in our view, will be of benefit.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I, too, wish to thank Mr. Kalomoh for introducing the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa. We are pleased to note that, since the Council mission's visit to Central Africa last June, the overall situation in that region has witnessed encouraging changes. The transitional Government and the legislative bodies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are functioning well. The security environment in the East has been enhanced. Relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours have improved to varying degrees.

The peace process in Burundi continues to make progress. The Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie have entered the peace process. The leaders of Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération met with the President of Burundi last month. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Burundi has been fully launched.

Events have demonstrated that the Council mission's visit and recommendations are useful in advancing the situation in Central Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. Naturally, the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi still face many uncertainties. Both countries have much to do in the areas of security sector reform, the rule of law and preparations for general elections. National reconciliation awaits further consolidation. The economies of both countries are extremely precarious due to the effects of the long war. The proper handling of the issues in those areas is of vital importance to achieving sustainable peace in both countries.

The international community should continue to follow the situation in both countries and encourage all parties to keep the peace, while adopting a comprehensive and integrated strategy to facilitate national reconciliation there and to help them achieve economic reconstruction.

We appreciate the outstanding role played by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in the peace process in that country, and we shall continue actively to support its work. We also support the United Nations in providing effective assistance to facilitate the settlement of the Burundi issue, and we urge the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) to enter the Burundi peace process expeditiously.

We think that, under the current circumstances, the convening of an international conference on the Great Lakes region is of great significance for further enhancement of the peace processes in both countries, for friendly relations among all countries of the region and for lasting peace, stability and development in Central Africa. We look forward to the holding of the conference as scheduled and to its positive outcome. We endorse the Secretariat's recommendations on increased resources for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burundi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nkingiye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): It is a real pleasure for me to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council during the month of February. China, which you represent, is indeed a sincere friend to Burundi and to all of Africa. The brief time you have spent in the presidency suffices to confirm your unfailing devotion to the cause of the United Nations. Your outstanding performance is a source of pride for your country and for us. I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor for the excellent work accomplished last month. In addition, I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kalomoh for his excellent introduction of the progress report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/52).

Thanks to the efforts of the States and the peoples of Central Africa, supported by the international community, the destructive wars and the tensions among neighbours that have characterized the past 10 years are beginning to fade. In their place, normalization processes are making undeniable progress, giving fresh hope to populations that have

endured unspeakable violence and suffering, including genocide.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General's report, peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, although still fragile, is no longer an unattainable objective. Since the last Security Council mission, in June 2003, new institutions have been established in both countries. They are guiding the transition — with some difficulties, to be sure, but also, and above all, with an unfailing determination to stop the war, to reconcile the populations, to build democracy and respect for human rights, to rebuild the nation and, finally, to rebuild regional solidarity on new foundations of trust, mutual respect and complementarity.

Here, I should like to elaborate on the steps taken by my country, Burundi, and on the challenges still to be met. During its visit in early June 2003, the Security Council resolved to continue its political support for the process of negotiation with the armed groups, to mobilize donors and to contribute to the fight against impunity.

On the first point, much progress has been made, since the principal rebel movement — the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) — has signed with the Government a ceasefire agreement now respected by both parties and has joined the transitional institutions. Therefore, all that remains is to canton its combatants and to begin disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) operations. Their cantonment, together with the formation of a joint protection unit for the institutions, should begin this very week.

The other movements are also in the process of gathering their combatants, most of whom are returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Only the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) movement remains outside the peace process. But there has been real hope of bringing it to the negotiating table since the meeting held from 18 to 21 January 2004 in the Netherlands between the President of the Republic and a delegation from that movement. Pressure by the international community on Mr. Agathon Rwasa, leader of the movement, is still urgently needed so that the process can be totally inclusive and can make steady progress.

Concerning support for the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB), it is important first of all to stress that it has done remarkable work since its deployment — work carried out under very difficult conditions related to the lack of logistical and financial resources, a situation that still persists. AMIB had been deployed initially to protect leaders returning from exile, to monitor the ceasefire, to assist in the first demobilization and disarmament activities and thus to create an environment conducive to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

Members will recall that the South African Deputy President, a mediator in the Burundi conflict, came before the Security Council on 4 December 2003 to advocate the dispatch of a United Nations peacekeeping mission, given the progress made in the peace process in my country. The time has come to meet that request; the Government of Burundi very much insists on this. We are not asking for the impossible; we ask only for what the Council provides to other countries in similar and sometimes even more complicated situations.

The sending to Burundi of a fact-finding mission by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations last weekend, in accordance with the Security Council presidential statement dated 22 December 2003 (S/PRST/2003/30), is a first step in the right direction. The Government is sincerely grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the members of the Council for that decision, and we trust that it will soon lead to the deployment of a true peacekeeping mission. If such a mission does not arrive in the coming weeks, the situation could swiftly deteriorate, both politically and in terms of security. Important reforms such as those of the security services and of the judiciary would be jeopardized, as would the demobilization and disarmament operation.

On the ground today, armed rebel movements — even those in the Government — are moving about in the country. They constitute a parallel administration and police force, holding the population hostage and intimidating supporters of different political movements. One spark could re-ignite the fire at any time in a country where civilian populations also bear weapons. Pre-electoral fever will undoubtedly accompany the debate on drafting an electoral code, a

body of common law and a post-transition constitution, which will begin soon and will be followed by local, legislative, senatorial and presidential elections before 1 November 2004.

As one can see, such a heavy programme for a country still traumatized by war and by hateful violence of every sort requires an international presence that can reassure the population and the national and international actors. We need such a mission to truly monitor ceasefire compliance, to conduct the DDRR operation with the well-known expertise of the United Nations, to cleanse the atmosphere for the work of the two Commissions on judicial inquiry and reconciliation provided for by the Arusha Peace Agreement, to facilitate the access of humanitarian workers to disaster victims, to allow for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and to chart the course towards the holding of peaceful, free and transparent elections.

Clearly, the arrival of a United Nations peacekeeping mission provided with an adequate mandate, is considered urgent and vital to the success of the Burundi peace process. Furthermore, such a mission in Burundi will help, in cooperation with MONUC, to stabilize the Great Lakes region, ensuring that the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Lusaka and Sun City accords for the Democratic Republic of the Congo will eliminate once and for all the tension at the borders caused by the transborder movement of rebels, refugees and members of the former Forces armées rwandaises and Interahamwe militia. My delegation would have preferred the report of the Secretary-General to mention the request made by Deputy President Zuma on behalf of the regional initiative.

I shall not dwell on the paramount importance of the fight against impunity; my delegation discussed that point enough in the debate on "Post-conflict national reconciliation: role of the United Nations" (see S/PV.4903). It will suffice for me to recall that the international judicial commission of inquiry is a pillar of the peace and reconciliation process and that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission alone will not be sufficient unless it is based on a minimum of justice, on individual and sincere repentance and on the psychological and physical rehabilitation of the victims. Here again, we ask that the United Nations support Burundi, as it has done in other situations of the same kind.

We are pleased that the Council has already asked the Secretary-General to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Burundi with a view to establishing the international judicial commission of inquiry; we hope that such a mission will be deployed as soon as possible. In that way, we will be able to build on a solid foundation, the possibility for reconciliation will be genuine and the resources promised in Brussels on 13 and 14 January for the reconstruction of Burundi will indeed serve that purpose.

The Government of Burundi, through the President of the Republic, pledged in Brussels to lead the process to a successful conclusion, and in partnership with the donors to manage in full transparency the assistance pledged in support of the process. Of course, the amounts promised must indeed be disbursed, and efforts must be made to alleviate the debt burden.

We sincerely thank the United Nations for having mobilized the international community to help Burundi. We are delighted at the role played by the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi, and we welcome the cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council in helping African countries emerging from conflict.

With regard to the international conference on the Great Lakes region, Burundi supports the preparatory process that is under way and hopes that it will be completed as soon as possible. We believe that this international conference will undoubtedly help us attain the desired objectives: stabilization, cooperation and peaceful coexistence among the signatories of the declaration of principles on good-neighbourly relations and cooperation, signed on 25 September 2003, in New York, under the auspices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

We ask the friends of the Great Lakes region of Africa to generously provide the resources needed by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to start the preparatory work for the conference, so that it can be a success for everyone.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the representative of Burundi for his kind words addressed to me and to the country I represent.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the very beginning of the transitional

period in Burundi, a law was adopted providing temporary immunity for political crimes. I would like to ask the representative of Burundi for what kind of crimes immunity is granted. Is it the intention to return to a consideration of these crimes at a later stage? I ask this because the Burundian experience could be useful in other country's situations.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Nkingiye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): Indeed, in the context of the political resolution of the peace process in Burundi, a decision was taken and a law was adopted to provide political amnesty to some leaders. This decision was political only in scope: the law clearly states that crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity are not within its ambit. It also says that the text remains open, and that national courts — and international courts, once they are established — must have every prerogative to conduct investigations into any suspicious cases, and that any immunity should be withdrawn when necessary. In other words, this is not a law that provides de facto amnesty to those who have committed horrendous crimes in Burundi.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting. We would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We would also like to congratulate the representative of Chile on the way in which he conducted the presidency last month.

My delegation welcomes the work of the Security Council mission to Central Africa, in which we participated. The mission's report was clear proof of the importance of such Security Council missions. These missions truly play an important role, particularly when they are followed by real efforts to implement their recommendations.

We welcome the implementation of many of the recommendations of the mission that visited Central Africa from 7 to 16 June 2003, in particular those related to the establishment, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of transitional institutions in a number of crucial and sensitive areas. We welcome the appointment of members of the transitional Government representing the eight components and entities of the inter-Congolese dialogue. We also welcome the adoption by the Council of Ministers of a set of important policy goals, in particular the formation of a national army and a national police force. The Council of Ministers also adopted a series of draft decrees on reorganizing the Government and the various ministries.

The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have made commendable efforts, in particular in rehabilitating the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in reforming the security sector. While we congratulate them on their efforts, we would like to recall that the road ahead is long, particularly when it comes to reforming the security sector and extending the authority of the Government throughout the country. There must be an end to impunity; here, of course, the rule of law needs to be strengthened. To achieve this, the transitional Government must play its role, particularly in strengthening the rule of law and creating institutions and entities that can reinforce that principle.

We all know that the regional dimension of conflicts in Africa is of crucial importance. Meetings in which heads of State of the region participated have made it possible to ease tensions in the region and strengthen understanding among neighbouring countries. We believe that such efforts should be continued in order to strengthen good-neighbourliness and to implement such agreements as the declaration signed by heads of State or Government in New York.

My delegation believes that special attention should be paid to disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation (DDRRR) programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, since these will have an important impact on peace in the region. That country should also make every effort to put an end to the illegal exploitation of its natural resources.

It is important that the work of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB), in which South Africa and other countries participate, be completed. We agree with the Secretary-General that AMIB faces difficulties that possibly could jeopardize its significant contribution to the peace process. We also support the Secretary-General's appeal to the donor community to generously provide funds to the mission.

The Government of Burundi has taken some positive steps to carry out the DDR programme. United Nations agencies in Bujumbura have also supported the efforts of the African Mission in Burundi and of the transitional Government. Top priority should be given to disarming child soldiers. During the Council mission's visit to Bujumbura, President Ndayizeye said that his country sorely needed financial support to cover all areas. Funds promised by donors at the conferences in Paris and Geneva must be disbursed in order to tackle the priority matter of establishing programmes and projects to restore peace in Burundi. We also support the appeal of the Secretary-General to bring about reconciliation between the transitional Government of Burundi and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie.

My delegation believes that the international conference on the Great Lakes region will be a unique, historic opportunity that will make it possible to bring about peace and end the conflict in the region and to achieve the subregion's integration. We believe that the efforts of Mr. Ibrahima Fall in this connection deserve all support and appreciation. At the end of his report, the Secretary-General made a number of observations that the Security Council and the relevant parties should take into consideration.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Ireland. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to maker her statement.

Ms. Murnaghan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

On behalf of the European Union, Mr. President, I would like to thank you and the Security Council for scheduling this meeting today, which is an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate our commitment to the Central African region. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his progress report on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa last year (S/2004/52). I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his briefing this morning.

Although Central Africa has the potential to be one of the richest subregions in Africa, its potential has not been realized. Many of the subregion's countries are either in conflict or in post-conflict situations, and the subregion as a whole continues to suffer from the proliferation of small arms and armed groups, high unemployment among young people, an underdeveloped infrastructure, great numbers of displaced persons and refugees, poor human rights records and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Those are significant challenges that demand our attention. The European Union is convinced that tackling those shared problems also demands that we develop a regional approach which is in concert with our efforts in each of the individual countries concerned.

In considering a regional approach — and in particular the convening of the international conference for the Great Lakes region — it is encouraging to note that the Secretary-General has said that the prospects for success in the region have improved significantly, most notably in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The European Union believes that the success of the Great Lakes conference will depend primarily on the common political will of the countries involved in achieving shared objectives. In that regard, we welcome the important progress made in the preparatory process to date, including the outcomes of the most recent meeting in Addis Ababa.

The European Union suggests that the conference will be all the more successful if an agreed time frame for clear and realistic goals based on concrete operational agreements or projects can be defined early on. In that regard, it is now important that all the national preparatory committees take immediate steps to enable the agreed timetable for the holding of the conference to proceed on schedule.

The EU welcomes the Secretary-General's call for the first regional meeting of national preparatory committees to be convened as soon as possible. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, it is during that first regional preparatory meeting that detailed

discussions on substance and priority programmes expected from the international conference will be initiated at the regional level. In addition, coordination and consistency with other existing processes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development are also important.

As preparations continue throughout the year towards the first summit of the conference, the European Union stands ready to engage as a committed and supportive partner to the countries of the region, as a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region, through the good offices of the EU Special Representative for the Great Lakes, Mr. Aldo Ajello, and by our efforts to strengthen more effective subregional cooperation and integration through mechanisms such as those set up by the Economic Community of Central African States.

As I mentioned previously, the prospects for the international conference on the Great Lakes region are much improved due to the progress made in the peace processes in the region.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European Union is encouraged by the significant improvements achieved. Those include, inter alia, the improved security situation, signs of national reunification such as increased transport links and improving commerce, better relations between that country and its neighbours, and progress in security sector reform. The EU commends the transitional Government in its implementation of the Sun City and Pretoria agreements. Difficult decisions have been taken, and the commitment of the parties is encouraging. Nevertheless, the situation remains fragile, and the European Union urges President Kabila and his Government to continue their work and put in place the legislative framework and establish the national institutions required for the holding of free and transparent elections at all levels, the formation of restructured and integrated military and police forces and the implementation of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme.

The European Union is committed to underpinning peace, security and democracy in Democratic Republic of the Congo. Operation Artemis and the EU's support for the Integrated Police Unit are clear demonstrations of that commitment. The EU stands ready to support concrete initiatives for the rebuilding of a stable Congolese State able to guarantee the safety of the Congolese people, national reconciliation and stability in the region. In that regard, the European Union commends the Secretary-General for his initiative last week in calling a high-level meeting to consider a strategy for the international community's support of the security sector reform effort.

The European Union is greatly encouraged by recent progress in Burundi. Since we last had the opportunity in the Council Chamber to discuss the state of the peace process there, a significant milestone has been reached with the convening of talks between President Ndayizeye and a delegation from the Forces nationales de libération (FNL). The European Union is pleased that those talks took place in a constructive and cordial atmosphere. We also welcome the parties' recognition of the need to end violence in Burundi and their willingness to continue the dialogue.

The European Union hopes the proposed follow-up meeting between President Ndayizeye and the FNL takes place at the earliest opportunity. The EU calls for the cessation of all hostilities in Burundi and for the conclusion of an agreement for the inclusion of the FNL in Burundian State institutions. The EU remains willing to assist the parties in their quest for a peaceful solution, and we reconfirm our readiness to support Burundi in its reconstruction efforts, which remain severely hampered by the ongoing violence in the absence of an all-inclusive peace agreement.

The European Union is committed to working closely with our African partners to strengthen African capacities in the area of conflict resolution and peacekeeping. In this regard, the European Union commends the African Union for establishing the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) — the first force of its kind in the history of the African Union. The European Union fully supports this initiative and is contributing €25 million to AMIB. In addition, a number of EU member States have also made significant national contributions, both in advance of and in response to the Secretary-General's recent appeal for support.

Notwithstanding the success and importance of AMIB, the European Union believes, as stated last November in this Chamber, that the option of a United Nations operation in Burundi, authorized by the Council, will have to be considered in due course. In this regard, the EU welcomes the fact that the

Secretary-General is sending an assessment mission to Burundi later this month, and we look forward to its reporting in due course.

The wind of peace is blowing across the African continent. Africa and its people deserve our full support in their quest for peace, democracy and sustainable development. Nowhere is this more true than in Central Africa. The European Union recognizes this obligation, and Africa, the United Nations and the whole international community will find the EU to be a willing and eager partner for peace and development for all the African peoples.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): It is regrettable that the situation in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region remains tense and fragile, and therefore requires the continuing involvement of the international community. It is important to recognize that conflicts in that region often involve neighbouring countries, which obliges us to seek their resolution from a regional perspective. I therefore welcome your decision, Mr. President, to convene this meeting, which will enable us to address the issues from a region-wide perspective.

At the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III), held last September, Japan indicated that the consolidation of peace is one of three pillars of our assistance to Africa and that great emphasis is to be placed on the promotion of human security. We consider the Great Lakes region to be a priority subregion — one in which efforts for the consolidation of peace and the promotion of human security are definitively required.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would first like to express our deep sorrow over the killing in the Ituri region of one of the Kenyan military observers from the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). That occurrence demonstrates that, despite the progress in the peace process since the establishment of the transitional Government, the situation in the eastern part of the country remains insecure and precarious.

Japan fully supports the focused redeployment of MONUC troops to the eastern areas. In order to further strengthen the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it goes without saying that reform of the security sector is of vital importance. Japan thus decided last October to extend assistance in the amount of approximately $4 million for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Congolese soldiers. We are also considering extending additional assistance in this area, in coordination with the United Nations and other donors.

I understand that the Security Council is discussing measures to enhance the arms embargo imposed in the eastern part of the territory, such as the establishment of a group of technical experts to conduct preliminary investigations and of a sanctions committee to make recommendations to the Council based on the findings of the expert group, as proposed by the Secretary-General. We would like to stress in this connection that any measures introduced by the Council must be based on a careful study of their cost-effectiveness, in order to ensure that they are both feasible and effective.

As for Burundi, Japan welcomes the meeting that took place in the Netherlands between the representatives of the Forces nationales de liberation and President Ndayizeye, and their agreement to continue their talks. We strongly hope that, although the situation is still fragile and the outcome difficult to predict, those talks will eventually lead to lasting peace in Burundi. At the same time, we are very much encouraged to note that African initiatives for conflict resolution and peace consolidation are also under way in Burundi. The efforts of South Africa and Tanzania to facilitate and mediate a peace agreement, the summit-level initiative of the Great Lakes region, and the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) — the first peacekeeping operation of the African Union (AU) — all represent the crystallization of the main principle underlying the New Partnership for Africa's Development and TICAD — that is, African ownership — and we greatly appreciate those efforts.

We welcome the entry into force of the Protocol on the Peace and Security Council of the AU, which will enable African countries to deal with conflict in the region more effectively. Japan is convinced that conflicts in Africa can be more effectively addressed by African countries themselves, as they naturally have greater knowledge and cultural sensitivity, as well as a

strong sense of ownership, with regard to conflict in the region. Also, Japan believes that the success of such AU activities, including AMIB, will be of decisive importance for conflict resolution in Africa in the future. Japan appreciates the contribution of South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique in this connection and strongly hopes that, given sufficient international support, the activities of AMIB will continue to be conducted effectively.

As a member of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi established by the Economic and Social Council, I had the valuable experience of participating in the international effort to conduct a needs assessment exercise in the areas of humanitarian and economic assistance, as well as in the formulation of advice on the coordination and effective implementation of such assistance. I found that Burundi needs international assistance in a number of areas. In order to promote the post-conflict peace process in Burundi, Japan intends to support that country, in coordination with other countries, the United Nations and the international organizations concerned. More concretely, we will consider extending appropriate assistance for improving human security for the people, promoting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and implementing elections in accordance with specific requests by the Government of Burundi and international organizations, once relevant national programmes have been finalized.

I am aware that a United Nations reconnaissance mission is now on the ground to assist in the effort to consolidate the peace in Burundi. Japan intends to send a concurrent mission to Bujumbura next week to have discussions with our partners on future cooperation between our two countries. To date, the Security Council has assessed the situation among its 15 members only and made important decisions without consulting the major non-member financially contributing countries — although the Council certainly expects to share the financial burden of its decisions with the non-members.

Japan therefore welcomes the fact that on this occasion the Secretariat is providing major donors and contributors with the opportunity to send concurrent missions to conduct assessments alongside the United Nations mission. We hope that this will become a precedent for the future. We would also like to see Burundi, in the process of its transition from the post-conflict stage to reconstruction and development, become a model for the promotion of human security in Africa.

As a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, Japan finds it regrettable that the international conference has been postponed until the end of this year. Naturally, we are hoping that the conference will be a success, but at the same time we are concerned about the overly broad themes and agenda. We would like to emphasize that the focus of the conference should be the consolidation of peace.

In order to consolidate peace, it is essential to demonstrate the dividends of peace to the people in the local community and to advance the peace process, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and security in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Relying on this conviction, we remain strongly committed to the consolidation of peace in the region.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52) reflects something that my delegation would like to emphasize today before the Security Council, namely, that despite the signs of positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, there are still challenges to the restoration of peace in its full sense to those two countries. Conditions in the Great Lakes region in general are still extremely serious, and we must exert more effort to confront them. In this context, my delegation would like to make the following remarks.

First, it is important to recognize that the post-conflict phase in Central Africa requires partnerships between the transitional Government, the United Nations, the concerned regional and international parties, the African Union, subregional organizations and the community of international donors. Those partnerships must be based on the principle of integrated and balanced responsibilities among the partners.

We now have a clearer understanding of the needs and requirements of the different phases of

peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building in the region. Those requirements go beyond the very limited concept of peace to a much broader list of inter-related and overlapping political, humanitarian, economic and social elements. Such elements require an integrated package of assistance, incentives and obligations, which could be difficult to turn into practical measures if the required partnerships are not achieved.

Secondly, because addressing those elements in one State acquires specific importance based on the nature, specificity and aspects of that State's ongoing conflict, we urgently need a more comprehensive regional vision of the broad-based issues which extend beyond the national borders of any individual country and impact regional stability and peace. Such issues include, in particular, the status of refugees, repatriation of ex-combatants to their original countries and social and economic development.

We therefore look forward to the continuation of the current preparatory process for an international conference on peace, security and democracy in the Great Lakes region, under the joint auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. The idea of holding the conference is a practical translation of the concept of partnership to which we aspire, as well as a manifestation of the comprehensive vision of the organic link between the concepts of security, on the one hand, and development, on the other hand, including its political, economic and social elements.

In that context, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the invitation extended by the seven core countries to Egypt to participate in the conference as an observer, a matter which reflects the strong natural and strategic links between the peoples of the Nile Valley and those of the Great Lakes. Here I note that we aspire to contribute to that process by providing the necessary political and technical guidance to make the conference successful and to reach its goals and objectives.

Thirdly, the Central African region, and particularly Burundi, is witnessing the beginnings of the evolution of the role of the African Union in peacekeeping efforts in the continent. We would like today to note our appreciation of the African States that are participating in the first peacekeeping mission that the African Union has successfully implemented, in Burundi, despite the well-known financial and logistical difficulties that the mission faces. Here, we call for the United Nations and the community of international donors to provide all forms of political, technical and financial assistance to the African Union in Burundi, as an emerging model reflecting the desire of Africans to undertake an ever-growing role in peacekeeping and to gradually fulfil their participation in the international partnership to bring peace and security to Africa.

Fourthly and finally, the relative progress achieved in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an indicator of what can be achieved by a partnership between the United Nations and the national, regional and international powers during one of the most difficult and intractable crises, provided that the parties have the necessary political will.

One of the most significant challenges facing the partners in the forthcoming stage is how to deal with the continuing illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and how to channel the revenues from its natural resources towards efforts to bring peace and reconstruction, instead of using those resources to destabilize the eastern and northeastern areas of country. Those resources must serve, as well, in the rehabilitation and reform of the security sector as preparation to gradually extend the authority of the transitional Government to all parts of the country.

In that context, we look forward to the Security Council taking specific steps to deal with the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the flow of arms to the forces and factions which resist and obstruct efforts to bring about peace and reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We look forward to the transitional Government and the international donors being committed to their agreements concerning the measures and steps necessary to reform the national security sector. We believe that the members of this Council should recognize that the huge efforts already invested in the restoration of stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve all ways and means possible to overcome the challenges that still threaten that country which is considered a cornerstone of stability in the Central Africa region as a whole.

Finally, I would like to express to you, Sir, our deepest thanks for organizing this meeting.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Rwanda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamanzi (Rwanda): This being the first time my delegation has taken the floor in the Security Council in the month of February, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council.

I would also like to thank you, Sir, for calling a meeting to discuss the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa (S/2004/52). Further, I thank the members of the Security Council for their continued interest in and concern for the Central African subregion.

Last week a Kenyan military observer serving in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), Major Peter Wachai, was killed while on duty in a village near Bunia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My Government joins others in expressing its condolences to the Government and the people of Kenya on that loss, and in calling for the killers to be brought to justice.

Rwanda witnesses with much encouragement and interest the ongoing peace processes in which its neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi are engaged, despite the many challenges they still face. In this regard, Rwanda wishes once more to pledge its unwavering support for these processes and is looking forward to the renaissance of the two countries as stable nations.

My Government hailed the establishment of transitional institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year. We believe that this not only fulfils an important requirement of the Lusaka Agreement, but also paves the way for a genuine reconciliation process. My Government has since begun the process of normalizing relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As highlighted in the report, the Rwandan Foreign Minister visited Kinshasa last October to meet with President Kabila and other Congolese officials to express the Rwandan Government's support for the transitional Government and to express our desire that the two countries work collaboratively to restore peace and security and to promote development in the region. Prior to this, at the invitation of the Government of Rwanda, two Congolese Vice-Presidents, Mr. Arthur Zaidi Ngoma and Mr. Azarias Ruberwa, attended President Kagame's inauguration in September and the Congolese Minister for Regional Cooperation, Mr. Mbusa Nyamwisi, visited Kigali for talks in October. Rwanda believes that these meetings are the building blocks for the normalization of relations between our two countries.

With respect to the situation in Ituri, my Government is greatly concerned by the continued lawlessness and violence in the province, which result in suffering for the ordinary people. We welcome the Security Council's decision to deploy the MONUC Ituri Brigade with a Chapter VII mandate, as well as the Mission's military expansion outside Bunia.

The continued presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of armed and dangerous former Rwandan Army (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe militia will be a threat to the security of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region until they are effectively disarmed and demobilized. In this connection, however, we welcomed the voluntary repatriation to Rwanda last year of about 100 commanders and men of ex-FAR. They were well received and resettled in their villages in a spirit of reconciliation and also with the intention of encouraging others still in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to return to Rwanda.

We are, however, concerned by reports that hundreds of other would-be returnees are being prevented from doing so by extremist elements among them. We appeal to the Security Council and to the international community as a whole urgently to address this issue. We also appeal to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to provide maximum cooperation to ensure that those who would like to return to Rwanda are able to do so and that those who choose to remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo do not present a security threat to Rwanda.

The Government of Rwanda commends the tireless efforts of the Government of Burundi, and President Ndayizeye in particular, to restore peace and security and to reconcile the people of Burundi. We welcome the signing of the comprehensive ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Conseil

national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie of Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza in Dar es Salaam last November. We also welcome the recent talks in the Netherlands between the Government and members of Agathon Rwasa's branch of the Forces nationales de libération. These are encouraging developments, which should be recognized and welcomed by the international community.

In his report, the Secretary-General stresses that, despite the encouraging developments in the peace process, there is a risk that hopeful signs could be lost if there is no peace dividend in the form of improved living conditions. Rwanda agrees entirely with that assessment. We therefore call upon the international community expeditiously to make the required funds available for economic recovery and humanitarian activities in Burundi.

On the final point of the Great Lakes conference, my Government commends the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, for the preparations undertaken so far and once again reiterates its full support for the process. Preparations for the conference are already under way at the national level in Rwanda. Consultations by the national coordinator and the national preparatory committee in preparation for the conference are already under way. Rwanda looks forward to the conference in the hope that it will enable us to conduct frank and productive discussions on the four main topic areas.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the representative of Rwanda for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.